

The Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society

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This is the Introduction to *The Meccan Revelations*, by Michel Chodkiewicz, William Chittick and James Morris, published by Pir Publications Inc., (227 West Broadway, New York, NY 10013).

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This volume consists of the English portions of *Les Illuminations de La Mecque - The Meccan Illuminations: Textes choisis / Selected texts*, originally published in Paris, 1988. A second volume is planned, which will consist of the French parts of that work, translated into English.

Ibn 'Arabi: Spiritual Practice and Other Translations, by James Morris. This is a collection of eight translations of shorter treatises by Ibn 'Arabi (such as his "Book of Spiritual Advice") and partial translations of chapters from the *Futuh al-Makkiya*, e.g. *The Spiritual Ascension: Ibn 'Arabî and the Mi'râj* [= Chapter 367 of the *Futuh al-Makkiya*].

Introduction to *The Meccan Revelations*

In assembling this volume, my colleagues and I intended each section to be relatively self-contained and accessible, together with its introductory matter and notes, to readers without previous contact with Ibn 'Arabî's works. In particular, we have chosen passages that are long enough, in most cases, to give readers some taste of the inseparable connection between Ibn 'Arabî's utterly unique style and forms of writing and the process and purposes of realization for which they were designed. For those who are encountering Ibn 'Arabî for the first time, or who would like to pursue their study of his work and teachings, this Introduction will provide helpful background information on the following areas:

1. Ibn 'Arabî's life and posterity;
2. the origin and distinctive characteristics of his *Meccan Revelations (al-Futuh al-Makkiya)*, in relation to his other works, including both the better known *Bezels of Wisdom (Fusus al-Hikam)* and the complex Islamic philosophical and poetic traditions that developed from it, as well as the poetic, allusive and highly symbolic works of his Andalusian and North African youth;
3. a summary outline of key assumptions common to all of his writings, which are essential for situating these translated chapters from the *Futuh al-Makkiya*; and of the pedagogical, rhetorical relations between the distinctive style and structure of *The Meccan Revelations* and Ibn 'Arabî's intended audiences, as he himself explains those points in his Introduction to that work;
4. the overall structure of the *Futuh al-Makkiya* and the place of these translated selections - as

well as the French translations to appear in a separate companion volume - within that larger structure;

5. and finally, a selection of further English readings in different areas related to Ibn 'Arabî, his works and teachings, and their ongoing influences and inspiration.

However, every reader should pay attention to one absolutely essential point: the notes to these translations - as indeed to any accurate and intelligible translation of Ibn 'Arabî - are an integral and indispensable part of the translation. Since the notes were not published as footnotes, it is necessary to read these translations with a bookmark at the corresponding notes, constantly moving back and forth, and also keeping in mind the ongoing technical sense of terms that are explained only once in a given translation, in a note at their first occurrence. The profusion of notes are necessary here, as with any of Ibn 'Arabî's writings, for the following basic reasons. First, he constantly uses what might otherwise be taken as "normal" Arabic terms, particularly ones drawn from the Islamic scriptural background of the Qur'an and hadith (traditions related from the Prophet, in specifically technical, personal senses (often profoundly based in the etymological roots of the underlying Arabic) that were already unfamiliar, and sometimes intentionally provocative, even to his original readers. To take one recurrent and fundamental example, in most of his writing, the expression *Muhammadan* carries the profound meaning of "spiritually universal" or "spiritually all-inclusive." *Shar'* (which he typically uses instead of the more reified *sharî'a*) refers in many contexts to the universal, ongoing process of spiritual "inspiration" and unveiling that is at the existential core of every human being's uniquely individuated spiritual life, as well as at the ontological Source [1] of the revealed religions. In either of these key cases, modern-day presuppositions (shared by Muslim and non-Muslim readers alike) are likely to suggest diametrically opposite meanings to readers who have not studied the corresponding notes of explanation or otherwise assimilated Ibn 'Arabî's technical terminology.

Second, Ibn 'Arabî - whether in his poetry or prose - constantly plays with the multiple, often very different meanings and registers of key Arabic terms (especially from the Qur'an), which in his writings are normally closer in their polyvalence to musical chords or the symbols of the *I Ching* than to the prosaic "equivalents" of any possible English translation. That semantic reality is what explains the translators' frequent interpolation of transliterations of the underlying Arabic terms, useful at least to those with some familiarity with Sufi and Qur'anic Arabic terminology.

Third, Ibn 'Arabî's usual procedure throughout *The Meccan Revelations* is to shift constantly between multiple registers and references to the terminology, structures and intellectual assumptions of a host of fields of traditional learning that are often unfamiliar to most modern readers. [2]

Finally, *The Meccan Revelations* are replete with allusive *cross-references* to other writings or discussions of related topics elsewhere in the same book, which are absolutely indispensable to understanding the particular passage, symbol or allusion in question. [3] This fundamental structural and stylistic feature is another key reason - as translators are particularly aware - that we still have so few complete translations of any larger sections of this intentionally "sealed" and mysterious work. And at the very least, explanatory notes are essential in such cases to help readers begin to reconstruct the experience of what it would be like to read through the *Futûhât* from the very beginning.

Ibn 'Arabî's Life and Posterity

An abundance of excellent books intended to introduce Ibn 'Arabî's life, historical context and basic teachings to general audiences have appeared in recent years. [4] Here it may suffice to recall that he was born in present-day Murcia, in Andalusia, in 1165/560; was raised in the great cultural centers of Islamic Spain, where his extraordinary spiritual gifts were already apparent by his adolescence; traveled and encountered innumerable spiritual teachers and "Friends of God" throughout Spain and North Africa in his youth; and left that area definitively for the Hajj, which brought him to Mecca - and the incidents that gave rise to *The Meccan Revelations* - in 1202/598. His years of maturity were spent in travel and teaching (usually privately, and with none of the public charisma and mass following of the more celebrated saints of his day) throughout the narrowing confines of the Islamic East, which was caught between the inroads of the Crusaders and the ongoing conquests of the Mongol hordes. Eventually he settled for a time in Konya (in present-day Turkey) and then in Damascus, where he died on November 9, 1240/638. His place of burial there has been a famous pilgrimage site since Ottoman times.

While all of Ibn 'Arabî's writings - and most especially the *Futuhat* - are replete with autobiographical discussions of his extraordinary inner visionary life and spiritual experiences, everything that is known about him from external sources indicates that in his later years he rigorously lived up to his own ideal of the hidden, "solitary" Friends of God (the *afrâd* or *malâmîya*) as the highest of the spiritual ranks, "invisible" in their outward conformity to the normative practices of the revelation and the ethical and social obligations common to all - carefully avoiding the public, visible "spiritual gifts" (*karamât*) popularly associated with many shaykhs and the then-nascent forms of institutionalized Sufism. Although he was accompanied by a small group of friends and close disciples, who became the eventual vehicles for his later wider influence, Ibn 'Arabî seems to have been best known in his own day as a religious scholar and student of hadith, an impression that could only have been encouraged by his phenomenally prolific literary output of hundreds of works, of which the *Futuhat* was apparently by far the longest and most comprehensive. [5]

Even Ibn 'Arabî's most skeptical biographers have been compelled to note the remarkable way subsequent history has come to confirm his self-conception of his destined role as the "Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood", [6] whose voluminous writings - and more important, the underlying spiritual "Reality" that they are meant to reveal and convey - were specially intended to open up the inner spiritual meanings at the heart of all preceding prophetic revelations (and especially the Qur'an and hadith). At the time of his death, Ibn 'Arabî himself was virtually unknown, in any wider public sense, in that Mongol/Crusader period when Islamic public authority almost vanished for some decades from all but a handful of Arab cities (and permanently from most of his native Andalusia).

Moreover, all of his "books" discussed here existed only in a handful of manuscript copies, left behind in the Maghreb or restricted to the assiduous students and future transmitters of his teachings during his final years in Damascus. Yet within a few centuries, through one of those mysterious developments so familiar to the historian of religions, his writings - foremost among them the *Bezels of Wisdom* (*Fusûs al-Hikam*) and these *Meccan Revelations* - had come to constitute the constantly cited source of inspiration, and justification (and, as a result, a frequent polemic target) for that vast movement of religious,

cultural, social, and literary creativity that brought into being the institutions and masterworks of the Islamic humanities. It was through those creative developments, in a wide gamut of languages, cultures and new institutions, that Islam became a true world religion, with its new cultural and political centers stretching from Southern and Eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa across to Central Asia, India and Southeast Asia. [7] Despite the historically quite recent ideological responses to colonialism, the transformations of modernity and the new demands of the nation-state, most Muslims throughout the world have lived for the past six or seven centuries in cultural, spiritual and religious worlds [8] whose accomplished forms would be unimaginable without the profound impact of ideas rooted in and expressed by Ibn 'Arabî. Even his later honorific title, "the greatest Master" (*al-Shaykh al-Akbar*), does not really begin to suggest the full extent of those influences.

A second, equally mysterious stage in Ibn 'Arabî's ongoing influence has been the ways his writings and concepts have served, over the past century, to inspire contemporary intellectuals and students of religion and spirituality outside traditionally Islamic cultures. Faced with a cosmopolitan, multireligious world not unlike the great Muslim empires of the Ottomans, Safavids and Moguls, these thinkers have increasingly relied on Ibn 'Arabî's works and ideas for the task of creating the common language and subtle conceptual structure required to communicate universal spiritual realities in an increasingly global civilization. [9]

The origins of *The Meccan Revelations* and their contrast with other writings Of Ibn 'Arabî

The inspirations that gave rise to *The Meccan Revelations* - as its title suggests [10] - took place in the course of Ibn 'Arabî's first pilgrimage in 1202/598. He describes those experiences in a famous passage at the beginning of the book, which has been translated and discussed by each of his recent biographers. As he explains there (I 10), "*The essence of what is included in this work comes from what God inspired in me while I was fulfilling my circumambulations of His Temple [the Ka'ba, bayt Allâh], or while I was contemplating it while seated in its holy precincts.*" However, the actual composition of his first complete version of this immense work, composed during a time of constant travels and the simultaneous production of dozens of other works, lasted until 1231/629. And a few years later, in 1233/632, Ibn 'Arabî began a revision and expansion of the text, which he finished in 1238/636, shortly before his death; the complete autograph manuscript of that final version, preserved by his famous disciple Qûnawî, survives. [11]

Ibn 'Arabî's assertion of a kind of divine inspiration for this work - a point on which his frequent discussions later served as a justification and inspiration for generations of later Muslim poets and creators - in fact extended to virtually all of his writings. As he has noted in another passage at the beginning of the *Futuhat* (I 59), "*Neither this book nor my other books have been composed in the manner of ordinary books, and I do not write in the way authors normally do.*" Instead, he affirms more explicitly in a famous later passage (II 456), "*I swear by God, I have not written a single letter of this book that was not in accordance with a divine 'dictation' [imlâ' ilâhî], a spiritual inbreathing and a 'casting by God' [ilqâ' rabbânî] in my heart!*" Perhaps just as important, Ibn 'Arabî's remarks suggest the powerful and essentially unique and inimitable ways in which his distinctive language and rhetoric in

this work so closely parallels the deeper structures of the Qur'an. [12] Despite the multitude of his later learned and artistic followers and interpreters, no one has really attempted any sort of detailed imitation of that distinctive Arabic literary style, which remains as unique, in its own way, as the equally inimitable Qur'an-inspired structures of Rumi and Hafez.

If the experience and practice of centuries of assiduous and admiring readers lends a certain external "authority" to Ibn 'Arabî's assertions in this domain, this does not at all mean that his books closely resemble each other. In particular, readers approaching the *Meccan Revelations* after having studied Ibn 'Arabî's *Bezels of Wisdom (Fusûs al-Hikam)* and the many traditions of later Islamic (and more recent Western) commentary on them, as we once did, will immediately feel that they are discovering a new continent. The essential guiding ideas are of course the same, but here they are expressed with a constant careful, vivid and enthralling attention to the "living" phenomenology and experiential roots - including, above all, a constant reference to the words and practices of Islamic revelation - underlying the typically ontological and metaphysical formulae of the *Fusûs* tradition. What is often "abstract" or schematic in the highly compressed language of the *Bezels of Wisdom* is expressed here with a profusion of immediate, compelling experiential illustrations: from Ibn 'Arabî's own spiritual life, the experiences of his friends and associates, of earlier Sufis, and the Prophet and Companions. All of these facets highlight the focus of the *Futuhat* on the living process and ends of spiritual realization, which is equally evident in the specific character of its language and structure, discussed in the following sections.

Those distinctive facets of *The Meccan Revelations*, in contrast with the *Fusûs* and its interpreters, help to explain certain of the criteria that guided the selection of chapters and topics for this anthology. Ample treatment is given to illustrations of the autobiographical dimensions of the *Futûhât*, its elaborate phenomenology of spiritual experience and realization, and its constant reference to the inspiration of the equally indispensable metaphysical and practical dimensions of Islamic revelation. A final distinctive characteristic of the *Futûhât*, in the context of Ibn 'Arabî's own writings, is the *relatively* discursive and comprehensible explanatory prose of most of the chapters - a quality that is only apparent, one must admit, when compared with the extremely allusive, poetic and mysteriously symbolic discourse that is more typical of the earlier writings from his North African and Andalusian period. [13]

Assumptions, intentions and the rhetoric of spiritual pedagogy in *The Meccan Revelations*

This is not the proper place to attempt to summarize the basic teachings of Ibn 'Arabî, a task that has been undertaken, for various audiences, in many recent publications cited or discussed later in this Introduction. Indeed, the single most useful contribution of these (and other) translations from the *Futuhat* may be precisely to *undermine* and call into question - in a particularly constructive and indispensable fashion - many of the notional "doctrines," slogans and ostensible teachings so often connected with the name of Ibn 'Arabî. Whether in later Islamic polemical contexts or Western scholarship, those stereotypes usually reflect the profound influence of his very short and complex later work,

the *Bezels of Wisdom (Fusûs al-Hikam)*, [14] the study and interpretation of which has over the centuries both inspired and sometimes antagonized many Islamic philosophic and theological traditions.

The inevitable result of such primarily intellectual (or heresiographical) efforts at "summarizing" Ibn 'Arabî - where he is somehow identified uniquely with a few paradoxical formulae supposedly drawn from the *Fusûs* - is quite similar to what has happened repeatedly over several millenia, in Hellenistic and later Western thought, with attempts to summarize Plato's ostensible "teachings." In both cases, what is lost by neglecting the indispensable role of the unique *dialectical*, dramatic rhetorical forms and underlying intentions of the author is what is in fact most essential to both: the actual transformation of each reader - a process necessarily engaging every dimension of the individual reader's being and particular *concrete* existence - through an active, lifelong process of "spiritual intelligence" (*tahqîq*, discussed below) that both authors understand to be at the very essence of those educational dramas (or "tests," in the language of the Qur'an) that define our life on earth.

In order to appreciate this guiding intention of all of Ibn 'Arabî's writing - which he summarizes or alludes to again and again in a few outwardly simple stories and formulae (usually famous "divine sayings") drawn from the canonical Sunni collections of hadith [15] - one has only to keep in mind what we might call a few "working assumptions." These are not the same as beliefs or teachings that one has to agree with in order to understand and appreciate what is being said. They are on the order of "orientations," or existential possibilities, that each reader needs to be aware of in order to begin to make the indispensable connections between the Shaykh's symbolic language and the universal, experiential realities (themselves in no way dependent on any particular set of beliefs or historical-cultural programming) to which those symbols correspond. Indeed, the necessary effort to rediscover the essential inner connections between those "revealed" symbolic languages and their real existential counterparts is often far *more* difficult for readers deeply imbued with culturally conditioned, inadequate conceptions of the reference points of those symbols.

On an initial, static or schematic level, the first of those fundamental working assumptions, is the profound concordance or correspondence, rooted in the deepest sources of reality, between the three "books" of being [16] or creation; of "revelation" (again, with meanings and domains that go far beyond the usual historicist notions that the word might suggest); and of the human soul. [17] Since each individual soul and its actual surrounding existence are concretely present and unique to that particular person at that unique moment - thanks to what Ibn 'Arabî, following the Qur'an, calls their ever-renewed situation of "constant re-creation" (*tajdîd al-khalq*) - his writings, for all their initial difficulty, are carefully designed to awaken the *particular* spiritual insights and meanings accessible to individual readers in their specific situation and stage of spiritual development.

As the reader of any of his works quickly discovers, Ibn 'Arabî's distinctive language and rhetoric of "allusion" (*ishâra*) - with its repeatedly jarring sudden shifts of perspective, tone, irony, paradox, mystery and (momentary) piety - is marvelously constructed, like its constant model in the Qur'an, to break through each reader's particular unconscious structures of belief and levels of habitual programming in order to make possible an

immediate, unitive perception (at once spiritual and intellectual) of "things as they really are," [18] of immediately inspired "knowing" (*'ilm*, in its Qur'anic sense). Needless to say, this effect presupposes a particular kind of focused, meditative study that resembles prayer or meditation more than what "reading" usually suggests today. What counts, at every stage, is each reader's active intention and willingness to seek and perceive the inner connection between Ibn 'Arabî's words and his or her own corresponding experience and realization.

That ultimate human goal of "immediate knowing" (*'ilm*; or of *'aql*, "divine intelligence"), as Ibn 'Arabî never ceases to remind us, is always a divine gift, the combined outcome of our spiritual intention, preceding experience and very limited efforts of divine "service" (*'ibâda*) with the much larger intangible mysteries of grace, destiny and each soul's intrinsic "preparedness" (*isti'dâd*) and spiritual maturity. The actual practice of spiritual intelligence, in all its equally essential stages and facets, is beautifully summarized in the remarkable Arabic word *tahqîq*, expressing the same process in more dynamic, existential terms: at once the active seeking of what is truly real (that Reality, *al-haqq*, which is the truly divine), the inner process of "realization," and the wider, ongoing ethical and social process of "actualizing" those ethical imperatives [19] that can only be truly and creatively, responsibly grasped in the light of that same spiritual intelligence.

In addition to giving a central role to the scriptural symbolic language of the Qur'an and hadith, Ibn 'Arabî uses a number of different technical "languages" and bodies of symbolism to refer to both of his other working hypotheses: i.e., the plane of "being," or ontology, and the plane of individual spiritual realization, or spiritual epistemology. His most common and all-encompassing symbolic languages in both domains are also drawn from the Qur'an and hadith: i.e., the scriptural discussions and allusions to cosmology and cosmogenesis, including the complex theological language of the divine Names [20]; and the rich, psychologically acute and precise symbolism of eschatology, which is particularly well illustrated in the selections translated below.

Moreover, as is true throughout pre-modern Islamic culture and literatures, Ibn 'Arabî's actual use and understanding of those scriptural languages is inseparable from the elaborate corresponding terminologies of Islamic philosophy, science and theology, on the ontological side; and from the equally complex languages of Islamic ritual and devotional practices and the nascent Sufi tradition, on the side of spiritual realization.

The profusion and initial unfamiliarity of these symbolic languages for most modern readers is a serious obstacle to both the translation and the understanding of Ibn 'Arabî's work, especially since most accessible Western writing on Ibn 'Arabî, until quite recently, has focused on the abstract ontological language and insights associated with his later *Bezeels of Wisdom*. What makes this volume of selections from *The Meccan Revelations* still the best available introduction to Ibn 'Arabî's work is precisely the fact that most selections here are intentionally taken from passages that are directly connected with "the language of the soul" and its familiar, immediately apparent realm of experience and transformation: i.e., the Sufi language of spiritual states, stations and inspirations; and the rich spiritual symbolism of Islamic eschatology (as that was developed through earlier centuries of Sufi writers and mystics). Eventually, as each reader becomes more familiar with the actual existential referents - the "realities" (*haqâ'iq*) - underlying Ibn 'Arabî's ontological and

cosmological discussions, it will become clear that those discussions are also *equally* phenomenological descriptions of the stages and settings of the larger process of realization. [21] But unprepared readers, with rare exceptions, should find the readings here (together with their notes) far more accessible than many other translations of Ibn 'Arabî's works. [22]

Teaching Ibn 'Arabî's works for decades to a wide range of audiences, almost all without any serious background in Arabic or traditional Islamic learning, has amply confirmed the essential practical reality that Ibn 'Arabî boldly and openly states in his own Introduction to this work: what really counts, in approaching and learning from these 'Meccan Illuminations' - as, no doubt, from their Qur'anic model and inspiration - is each reader's singular aptitude and concentrated intention. What he says there is indispensable in appreciating the different audiences for whom he has written this work, as much today as in his own time:

Introduction to the book of *The Meccan Revelations*) [23]

We said: From time to time it occurred to me that I should place at the very beginning of this book a chapter concerning (theological) creeds, supported by definitive arguments and salient proofs. But then I realized that that would distract the person who is properly prepared and seeking an increase (in spiritual knowledge), who is receptive to the fragrant breaths of (divine) Bounty through the secrets of being. For if the properly prepared person persists in *dhikr* ('remembering' God) and spiritual retreat, emptying the place (of the heart) from thinking, and sitting like a poor beggar who has nothing at the doorstep of their Lord - then God will bestow upon them and give them some of that knowing of Him, of those divine secrets and supernal understandings, which He granted to His servant al-Khadir. [24] For He said (of al-Khadir): *a servant among Our servants to whom We have brought Mercy from Us and to whom We have given Knowledge from what is with Us* [18:65]. And He said: *So be mindful of God, and God will teach you* [2:282]; and *If you are aware of God, He will give you a Criterion* (of spiritual discernment); and *He will give you a light by which you will walk* [57:28]. [25]

'Abû Yazîd (al-Bastâmî) said: 'You all took your knowledge like a dead person (receiving it) from another dead person. But we took our knowing from *the Living One who never dies* [25:58]!' So the person with concentrated spiritual intention (*himma*) during their retreat with God may realize through Him - how exalted are His gifts and how prodigious His grace! - (forms of spiritual) knowing that are concealed from every theologian on the face of the earth, and indeed from anyone relying on (purely intellectual) inquiry and proofs, but who lacks that spiritual state. For such knowing is beyond (the grasp of) inquiry with the intellect.

Ibn 'Arabî then goes on to explain more carefully the essential differences between that inspired spiritual "knowing" (*'ilm*, in the Qur'anic sense) and the theoretical "knowledge" of the theologians, scientists, etc., which is acquired and supported by intellectual argument. [26] Having done so, he then offers (in his final version of the *Futuhat*) three successive "creeds," which in fact suggest three different potential audiences who will find these *Meccan Revelations* either incomprehensible, not really needed, or of only limited utility. In particular, these remarks help explain why anyone who approaches the *Futuhat* (as it was actually written, of course, and not through extracts and short selections) without the necessary aptitudes and proper motivating intention will very quickly set it down. First, he

explains that he has begun with the creed of the uneducated ('*awâmm*) among the people of outward submission and unthinking compliance (*taqlîd*), and the people of (purely intellectual) inquiry (*nazar*). Next I shall follow it, Godwilling, with the creed 'in which I've alluded to the sources of the (theological) proofs for this religious community.' I've named it '*The Treatise Concerning What is Well-Known Among the Beliefs of the People of External Forms* (ahl al-rusûm).' Then I shall follow that with the creed of the elite among the people of God, the 'verifiers' (*muhaqqiqûn*) among the people of the path of God, the people of (spiritual) unveiling and finding.' And that completes the Introduction to this book.

In fact, however, that is *not* the end of Ibn 'Arabî's Introduction. For he then goes on to add two essential allusions to the underlying structure and deeper intentions of the work - essential "keys" given to his ideal audience, as it were - which have never ceased to fascinate his serious interpreters:

But as for presenting the credo of the quintessence (of the spiritual elite), I have not given it in detail in any one place, because of the profundities it contains. Instead *I have given it scattered throughout the chapters of this book*, exhaustively and clearly explained - but in different places, as we've mentioned. So those on whom God has bestowed the understanding of these things will recognize them and distinguish them from other matters. For this is the True Knowing and the Veridical Saying, and there is no goal beyond It. '*The blind and the truly seeing are alike*' in Its regard: [27] It brings together things most far and most near, and conjoins the most high and most low.' And in his final version of *The Meccan Revelations*, completed shortly before his death, he set down this new "last word," which adds one key explanation as to why the full understanding of his writing is so challenging:

Now this was the credo of the elite among the people of God. But as for the credo of the quintessence of the elite concerning God, that is a matter beyond this one, which we have scattered throughout this book because most intellects, being veiled by their thoughts, fall short of perceiving it due to their lack of spiritual purification.

The Introduction to this book is finished. God speaks the Truth, and He guides on the right Way.

The structure of *the Meccan Revelations* and the place of these selections

There is every indication that the architectonic structure and detailed outline of the 560 chapters of *The Meccan Revelations*, which is given in full detail (sixty-two pages in the new critical edition) in the elaborate Table of Contents (*fihris*) that precedes Ibn 'Arabî's Introduction, dates from the initial inspiration of this book during the author's first hajj in 1202/598. In reading the following selections - and indeed the many other short passages from the *Futuhat* that are gradually becoming available in Western languages - it is clearly important to have a general idea of the overall structure and the location of particular chapters within it, since each of the six main sections normally has its own distinctive type of writing and organizing substructures, with chapters of radically varying length (some are a few pages long, while others would take several volumes to translate into English). In particular, even a quick glance over the names of the sections should make it clear how central the forms, stages and wider process of spiritual "realization/verification" (*tahqîq*) actually are to the contents and intentions of this work. At the end of a brief discussion of each of the six sections we have indicated the original location of the chapters in this

anthology (both the English and the forthcoming translations from the French), as well as the "Part" number (I, II, etc.) and original translator, to facilitate reference from these translations to their original contexts in the *Futûhât*. The following six sections of *The Meccan Revelations*, with a total of 560 chapters, are preceded not only by Ibn 'Arabî's Introduction and Table of Contents, as already mentioned, but also by two more poetic and highly symbolic shorter passages: Ibn 'Arabî's "Opening Address" (*khutbat al-kitâb*), [28] which has been translated and studied in a number of places, and his introductory "Letter" (*risâla*) to his longtime Tunisian Sufi friend, al-Mahdawî, and other Sufi companions in Tunisia with whom he spent several fruitful months on his way toward Mecca. [29]

I. Section on the fields of [inspired] knowing (*fasl al-ma'ârif*):

Chapters 1 - 73 [30]

This opening section contains chapters of very different lengths introducing, often in abbreviated and initially mysterious form, all the major themes found throughout the rest of the book. For example, the first thirteen chapters develop in a variety of symbolic languages (especially through the symbolic meanings and scriptural correspondences of the letters of the Arabic alphabet) the cosmological "map" of creation and its mirroring in the noetic reality of the "Complete Human Being" (*al-insân al-kâmil*). Then Ibn 'Arabî turns to a long series of fascinating and eminently readable discussions of the different spiritual types of perfection and realization and the various "Friends of God" who epitomize them, interspersed with further epistemological and cosmological elaborations. Chapters 59 - 65 (and scattered earlier passages) introduce the scriptural symbols of eschatology in a way that clearly highlights their role as a detailed symbolic map of the process of spiritual realization, [31] while chapters 66-72 - one of the most fascinating and potentially valuable sections of the entire *Al-Futûhât* - offer what is almost certainly the most detailed and exacting phenomenology of spiritual experience in the Islamic tradition, presented in terms of an irenic reconciliation of contrasting legal interpretations of the basic ritual practices of Islam (purification, prayer, fasting, etc.). And the lengthy chapter 73 (numerous parts of which are translated in this volume) includes both an elaborate discussion of the types of spiritually realized "saints" (*awliyâ*) and Ibn 'Arabî's famous responses to Hakîm Tirmidhî's marvelous "spiritual questionnaire," or inventory of symbolic expressions that can only be understood by purely spiritual inspiration. [32]

In this anthology: chapters 6 ("Divine Names and Theophanies", Chittick) and 73 (sections in "Divine Names and Theophanies", and "Lesser and Greater Resurrection", Morris); in the French sections of Sindbad edition: chapters 2 (Part VIII, Gril) and 73 (Part VI, Gril).

II. Section on (proper) modes of action (*fasl al-mu'âmalât*):

Chapters 74-189

Although the title of this section initially (and no doubt intentionally) evokes the usual second half of Islamic books of hadith and *fiqh* (normally following the purely individual "acts of devotion," *ibâdât*), which deals with all of the ethical dimensions of social life (marriage, inheritance, proper behavior, trade, etc.), Ibn 'Arabî turns his attention here to the very different "interactions" between each soul and its Source, framed in terms of the spiritual "stations" (*maqâm*) that traditionally constitute the essential stages of the spiritual path of realization. Many of the 116 chapters in this section appear in pairs of short

chapters - well illustrated by the two sets translated in "Towards Sainthood" in this volume - briefly describing each station and then a further stage of "advancement" that goes beyond the initial dualistic distinction of "servant" and "Lord." Indeed, the whole section can be seen as centered around Ibn 'Arabî's most characteristic spiritual ideal of *'ubûdiyya*: the necessity of becoming a "pure servant" whose will has become entirely identified with God's, in an active life of spontaneous, purely voluntary divine service. Each spiritual virtue introduced briefly here is dealt with in increasingly elaborate and subtle ways throughout the rest of the *Futûhât*.

In this anthology: chapters 130-131, and 140-141 ("Towards Sainthood", Chittick); in the French sections of the Sindbad edition: chapters 88, (IV, C. Chodkiewicz); and 161 (VI, Gril).

III. Section on spiritual states (*fasl al-ahwâl*):

Chapters 190-269

The eighty chapters of this section take up the classical Sufi distinctions of these passing spiritual states, but typically with an approach - well illustrated in the selections translated here - quite distinctive to Ibn 'Arabî. As in much of the *Futûhat* and his other writings, what he tries to do here can appear as a sort "*ontological* commentary" on the vast earlier literature and practical traditions of Sufi spiritual commentary, which he usually assumes to be quite familiar to his readers. Each earlier "phenomenological" expression or category - often poetic, vague and even potentially dangerous in its original formulation - is presented and analyzed in its wider contexts (both ontological and epistemological), highlighting its particular role, and simultaneous limits and dangers, in the larger process of spiritual realization.

In this anthology: chapters 195, 205, 222 ("Towards Sainthood", Chittick); 198 ("Divine Names and Theophanies", Chittick).

IV. Section on spiritual "points of descent" (*fasl al-manâzil*):

Chapters 270-383

Many of the most celebrated and lastingly influential passages of the *Futûhât*, including chapters 366, 377 and others partially translated here, are to be found in this section. The familiar Sufi term for the spiritual pilgrim's "waystation" (*manzil*: taken from pre-Islamic Arabic poetry) here has a very specific and uniquely "Akbarian" meaning: "*The place in which God descends to you, or where you descend upon Him*" (II 577). The 114 dense and often lengthy chapters of this section correspond, in inverse order, to the inner meanings of each Sura of the Qur'an, and each *manzil* is explicitly (albeit mysteriously) related as well to one or more of the spiritual "Realities" of Muhammad, Jesus and Moses. Finally, and even more mysteriously, each chapter concludes with a long but highly enigmatic catalogue of the various spiritual gifts and insights that are "given" in connection with this divine encounter, often connected with particular details of the corresponding Sura. Without exaggeration, an adequate explanation and translation of many of these individual chapters would require a small book. [33] In this anthology: chapters 302, 351, 369 ("Lesser and Greater Resurrection", Morris); 366 ("At the End of Time", Morris); 367 ("Ibn 'Arabî's Spiritual Ascension", Morris); 311 and 372 ("Towards Sainthood", Chittick). In the French sections of the Sindbad edition, chapters 318 and 344 (IV, C. Chodkiewicz).

V. Section on spiritual "mutual points of encounter (of Lord and servant) (*fasl al-munâzalât*):

Chapters 384-461

The seventy-eight chapters of this section are truly "Illuminations," complex series of reflections and flashes of insight ("commentary" is far too pedestrian a term!) initially connected with a single key passage or symbolic phrase from the Qur'an or other divine sayings.

In the French sections of the Sindbad edition: chapters 420 (VI, Gril); 437 (IV, C. Chodkiewicz).

VI. Section on spiritual stations (*fasl al-maqâmât*):

Chapters 462-560

Apart from the final three chapters of *The Meccan Revelations*, most of the ninety-nine chapters [34] in this vast section (itself a quarter of the entire *Al-Futûhât*) are devoted to Ibn 'Arabî's personal identification [35] of a long series of spiritual "Poles" (here in the wider sense of the emblematic "chief" of a particular spiritual type, station or mode of realization) and the profound inner spiritual realization of a particular spiritual "motto" (*hijîr*: often familiar Qur'anic verses, divine Names or other traditional formulas of *dhikr* and invocation) that becomes fully "illuminated" for those participating in that spiritual station. As with the preceding section, these chapters are usually too rich and complex in their contents to be summarized in any meaningful fashion.

Each of the final three chapters of this section is a long recapitulation, in different domains, of the contents of the book as a whole. Thus chapter 558 (partly translated in this anthology) is an immense discussion of the influences and underlying realities of each of the ninety-nine divine Names. Chapter 559 is devoted to an enigmatic summary of the divine "secrets" concealed in each of the preceding chapters. And the vast concluding chapter of "spiritual advice," frequently copied and reprinted as a separate volume, brings together a host of selections of practical ethical and spiritual advice, drawn from scriptural sources, earlier prophets, Companions and saints, and other (not specifically religious) ethical writers. What lends it all its power and lasting importance is the way all the preceding "illuminations" will have radically transformed, for readers who have faithfully followed Ibn 'Arabî up to this point, their inner awareness and appreciation of the actual, unimaginable complex of meanings, intentions and spiritual realizations which are in fact encapsulated and briefly expressed in each of those particular bits of spiritual advice. In the larger context of the classical schemas of spiritual "journeys", it is also an eloquent reminder of Ibn 'Arabî's characteristic insistence that the final, unending journey, for the fully realized soul, is always the "Return": "from and with God, to the creatures". It is an elaborate reminder of the ultimate finality and responsibilities of spiritual realization, which are never far from Ibn 'Arabî's sight and intention. In this anthology: chapters 470 ("Toward Sainthood", Chittick) and 558 ("Divine Names and Theophanies", Chittick).

Suggestions for further reading

The relative profusion of translations, biographies and studies of Ibn 'Arabî and his writings in recent years has created something of a fortunate dilemma for those readers, new to his

work, who might want to explore the perspectives opened up by this anthology. In addition to works already mentioned in earlier notes, the following suggestions, for those without any prior background in Ibn 'Arabî or the Islamic spiritual and philosophic traditions, are limited to English language books (partly because many of the most important recent French studies have been well translated into English). However, readers at home in Spanish will now find a number of important recent translations by Pablo Beneito, Victor Palleja and others, a happy sign of increasing interest in this native son who (like his near-contemporary Moses de Leon) must surely be counted among the enduring contributors to world civilization and religious understanding.

For Ibn 'Arabî's life, immediate historical context and a basic summary of his central teachings, one can now readily recommend S. Hirtenstein's *The Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn 'Arabî* (Oxford, Anqa/White Cloud Press, 1999), which is the first volume explicitly designed to introduce these points to a general, nonacademic English-speaking audience. The numerous photographs of the cities and sites where Ibn 'Arabî lived, taught and prayed are especially helpful for anyone unfamiliar with these cultural centers of the Islamic world. C. Addas's *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn 'Arabî* (Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 1993), ably translated into English, is a longer, slightly more academic introduction to the same subjects, giving greater detail on Ibn 'Arabî's own teachers and cultural roots in different fields of medieval Islamic scholarship. Her *Ibn 'Arabî: The Voyage of No Return* (Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 2000) is a shorter, more accessible introduction to Ibn 'Arabî's life and teachings. For Ibn 'Arabî's own vivid depiction of his earliest Spanish and North African teachers, companions and friends on the Sufi path, R. Austin's *Sufis of Andalusia* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1971) remains an indispensable and endlessly fascinating source. [36] Finally, William Chittick's *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabî's Metaphysics of the Imagination* (Albany, SUNY, 1989), offers a voluminously illustrated, detailed, and clearly structured introduction (based on hundreds of shorter translations from the *Futuhat*) to virtually all the key facets of Ibn 'Arabî's teaching.

For the *Bezels of Wisdom* (*Fusûs al-Hikam*) and the subsequent Islamic traditions of commentary, probably the most readable (and certainly the most comprehensible and clearly explained) introduction remains T. Izutsu's pioneering *A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism: Ibn 'Arabî and Lao-Tzu, Chuang-Tzu* (Tokyo, Keio Institute, 1966), [37] despite its reliance on the more Avicennan philosophic commentary tradition of al-Kâshânî. For the novice in this field, the English translation of T. Burckhardt's original French version of a few key selected chapters of the *Fusûs*, *The Wisdom of the Prophets* (Oxford, Beshara, 1975) is considerably more approachable than R. Austin's complete translation, *Ibn al-'Arabî: The Bezels of Wisdom* (New York, Paulist Press, 1980) which has long, helpful prefaces to each chapter.

An ever-increasing number of recent studies have elaborated the far-reaching influences of this work and its commentators throughout later Islamic culture and religious life, from the Balkans to China and Indonesia. See, among others, the voluminous anthology of related texts from many key figures in the later Islamic humanities (though the subtitle might suggest something quite different) included in S. Murata's *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought* (Albany, SUNY, 1992); the four-volume

version of later Turkish commentaries on the *Fusûs*, translated as *Ismail Hakki Bursevi's translation of and commentary on Fusûs al-Hikam'* (Oxford, MIAS, 1986); and perhaps most fascinating, S. Murata's recent far-reaching study of several Neo-Confucian Chinese Muslim thinkers profoundly influenced by Ibn 'Arabî, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light* (Albany, SUNY, 2000).

On a more widely accessible level, M. Sells's *Stations of Desire: Love Elegies From Ibn 'Arabî* (Jerusalem, Ibis, 2000) should now replace R. Nicholson's frequently cited versions (*The Tarjuman al-Ashwaq: A Collection of Mystical Odes*) as a superb introduction to the central poetic dimension of Ibn 'Arabî's work, which is of course quite evident in the "keynote" poems that introduce virtually every chapter of *The Meccan Revelations*. The even more recent translations of Ibn 'Arabî's prayers by S. Hirtenstein and P. Beneito, *The Seven Days of the Heart* (Oxford, Anqa, 2001) suggest something of the profound spiritual and devotional *practice* underlying and always assumed in Ibn 'Arabî's writings; the translators' introduction is especially helpful in that regard. And our forthcoming volume of Ibn 'Arabî's powerful shorter writings on practical spirituality, *Spiritual Practice and Discernment*, should make this central dimension of Ibn 'Arabî's work more widely accessible.

A more demanding, but absolutely fundamental and groundbreaking work on Ibn 'Arabî's understanding of "Sainthood" (*walâya*) - a study that has become indispensable for understanding the spiritual and conceptual underpinnings of this central feature of popular Islamic devotion and piety in every corner of the Islamic world, even today - is M. Chodkiewicz's *The Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the doctrine of Ibn 'Arabî* (Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 1993), ably translated but still to be studied in the original if at all possible. Finally, G. Elmore's recent study and translation of Ibn 'Arabî's early '*Anqâ*' *Mughrib*, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fulness of Time: Ibn al-'Arabî's "Book of the Fabulous Gryphon"* (Leiden, Brill, 2000) illustrates the many challenges of deciphering, much less translating, the extraordinarily cryptic poetic and symbolic writings from Andalusia and North Africa that preceded the composition of *The Meccan Revelations*.

The most extensive translations of the *Futuhat* to appear since the original publication of this anthology are certainly William Chittick's two massive volumes, the above-mentioned *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* and *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabî's Cosmology* (Albany, SUNY, 1998); they are to be followed by an equally long volume of translations on related areas of cosmogony and ontology. Complementary to those translations - in that they focus on the humanly immediate, active dimensions of eschatology, spiritual realization and Ibn 'Arabî's phenomenology of spiritual life - are a series of volumes on the *Futûhât*, including many translations and studies originally delivered (and sometimes published) as public lectures and conference papers over the past decade, which we plan to publish in book form in the near future. These include the translations of the eschatological chapters 59 - 65 and 271 (plus related passages from other chapters), already promised in the original notes to this book (*Ibn 'Arabî's "Divine Comedy": An Introduction to Islamic Eschatology*); *The Traveler and the Way: "Wandering" and the Spiritual Journey* (a translation and commentary on the *Risâlat al-Isfâr*, plus several chapters on the same theme from the *Futuhat*); and at least two volumes of thematic explorations of Ibn 'Arabî's treatment of spiritual topics in the *Futûhât*, accompanied by full

translations of key corresponding chapters. Indeed the level of scholarly understanding and worldwide interest in the *Futuhat* has approached the point where the possibility of a serious, collective effort to begin to translate at least the opening *Fasl* (more than a quarter of the entire work) is now being seriously considered. Such a task should be realizable within the next decades.

Anyone wishing to keep up with translations and studies of Ibn 'Arabî, and more particularly with the dramatic unfolding of worldwide academic research into his profound influences in all aspects of later Islamic religion and the Islamic humanities, should refer to past and present issues of the *Journal of the Muhyiddîn Ibn 'Arabî Society* (Oxford, now in its third decade). With contributions that have often been delivered first by world-renowned scholars, increasingly from all regions of the Islamic world, at the two international symposia sponsored by the Ibn 'Arabî Society each year (at Oxford and Berkeley), the journal has helped to create an active worldwide network of scholars, students and translators whose impact is increasingly evident in, among other fields, the number of international conferences now devoted to the "Greatest Master" and his later Muslim interpreters each year. This worldwide collective effort to rediscover the profound influences of Ibn 'Arabî and his teachings on central dimensions of Islamic culture from West Africa to China and Indonesia is not just an academic project of historical archeology: those involved, in each country and region concerned, are well aware of the contemporary and future significance of Ibn 'Arabî's understanding of the roots of Islamic spirituality and tradition for any lasting effort of renewal and revivification within a global civilization.

Finally, the truly great books in this field, as in any other, do not age, but only become more apparent with the passage of time. The following two classic volumes - both originally published in French, although fortunately available in reliable English translations [38] - were certainly not intended for beginners, in the sense we introduced earlier. Both are the mature, richly evocative and moving fruits of an intensely personal, life-long reflection on the central issues and perspectives of all of Ibn 'Arabî's accessible writings, with visions and emphases that are radically different, yet ultimately astonishingly complementary. The first is Henry Corbin's *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabî*; [39] the second is Michel Chodkiewicz's *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn 'Arabî, the Book and the Law* (Albany, SUNY, 1993). One could readily apply to both of these remarkable works what Ibn 'Arabî says of *The Meccan Revelations* and his ideal readers in his Introduction, quoted above: the "preparedness" such works require is not simply, or even essentially, academic. Reading them gives some sense of how diverse, yet powerfully transforming, the influences of Ibn 'Arabî have been and will continue to be.

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Notes

[1]I.e., as distinguished from the various *historically* accrued bodies of interpretation and application in various historical and cultural settings, which may or may not be in accord with that actual Source: hence the *inherently creative* and unavoidably *subversive* potential of Ibn 'Arabî's teachings in any particular historical setting, Islamic or otherwise.

[2] This includes the four immense, multidisciplinary fields of the Islamic "religious" sciences, the "intellectual" sciences (all of philosophy, science and logic in their Islamic forms), preceding Sufi tradition, and Arabic poetry and literature. Even in Ibn 'Arabî's day, very few individuals would have been seriously educated in more than one of these complexes of scholarship and learning. This is one of the main reasons that we still have very few *complete* translations of important longer chapters from the *Futûhât*. A particularly dramatic illustration from the original Sindbad volume, soon to be available in English, is Professor Denis Gril's introduction, translation and commentary on selected key passages explaining the "science of letters" (*'ilm al-hurûf*). Some sixty dense pages of French are necessary to communicate what is little more than a page from the original Arabic text. Fortunately, as can be seen in the rest of these selections, many passages do not require such detailed background explanations.

[3] M. Chodkiewicz's *An Ocean Without Shore* (see Introduction, "Suggestions for Further Reading") is the most profound and penetrating discussion of this essential feature of all of Ibn 'Arabî's writings.

[4] See Introduction, "Suggestions for Further Reading."

[5] See the basic reference in this area, O. Yahia's two-volume *Histoire et classification de l'oeuvre d'Ibn 'Arabî* (Damascus, I. F. D., 1964), which has been supplemented and corrected by several of the recent studies cited in the "Further Reading" section. The English biographies cited in that section also contain helpful summaries and descriptions of many of Ibn 'Arabî's major writings.

[6] This topic is well discussed in the biographies cited below, but the best and most extensive treatment is to be found in M. Chodkiewicz's *The Seal of the Saints* (see the "Further Reading" section).

[7] See a few key references discussed in the "Further Reading" section, and particularly the *forthcoming* Proceedings of the Kyoto Conference on Ibn 'Arabî's influences in Central and Southeast Asia and China held in January 2001. Perhaps the most emblematic illustration of this infinitely variegated historical process was Ibn 'Arabî's direct inspiration (largely based on chapter 371 of *The Meccan Revelations* and related eschatological interpretations scattered throughout the work) for the form and detailed structures and layout of the Taj Mahal: see W. Begley, "The Myth of the Taj Mahal and a New Theory of Its Symbolic Meaning," in *The Art Bulletin*, LXI:1 (March 1979).

[8] Particularly important were his lasting impact on and through later Islamic philosophy, spiritual poetry and music, and the universal spiritual practices associated with veneration of Prophet and saints, as well as specifically Sufi tariqas and their practices. The exploration of the further impact of "Akbarian" ideas, themes and insights during this period on cognate cultural forms in *other* religions and cultural communities living under Muslim rule in Ottoman, Safavid, South and Southeast Asian and Chinese contexts has barely begun. (One might cite here the pioneering efforts of Professor Paul Fenton regarding Jewish spiritual and religious encounters in Ottoman contexts at that time.)

[9] In addition to the frequent allusions to this subject in many of the writings of M. Chodkiewicz, see the more detailed references in our essay on "*Ibn 'Arabî in the 'Far West'*:"

Spiritual Influences and the Science of Spirituality" (in the Proceedings of the Kyoto Conference in note 7 above), and the chapter on Ibn 'Arabî in our *Orientations: Islamic Thought in a World Civilisation* (Sarajevo, El-Kalem, 2001).

[10]The word *fath* had by Ibn 'Arabî's time taken on the technical sense in Sufi discourse of a sudden, unexpected spiritual "illumination" or "inspiration" appearing without any prior mental preparation; in a literary sense, it also alludes to the "reconquest" of Mecca by the nascent Muslim community of Medina (and subsequent other stages in the expansion of Islam), which is of course the unifying spiritual drama of all the Medinan Suras of the Qur'an and their elaboration in Islamic tradition.

[11]Although the critical Arabic edition undertaken by O. Yahya unfortunately remains incomplete, as a result of these very early and fully reliable manuscripts (which were used for the first modern published versions of the *Futuhât*), students of the *Futuhât* do not face the major problems of highly corrupted texts and even entirely apocryphal attributions connected with many of Ibn 'Arabî's other writings. (See detailed discussion of the Arabic sources in M. Chodkiewicz's Introduction to the original Sindbad volume.) One of the major aids to be hoped for from a completion of the critical edition would be the full identification of all the other shorter works which Ibn 'Arabî either inserted and adapted as part of *The Meccan Revelations*, or in some cases may have been extracted and circulated as separate treatises at a later date (either by himself or later students).

[12]A few of those features are mentioned in the following section, but the best discussion (still very allusive, and assuming a detailed knowledge of the Qur'an and hadith) is scattered throughout M. Chodkiewicz's *An Ocean Without Shore*. One of the best illustrations of the distinctiveness of Ibn 'Arabî's own style is a rapid comparison with any of the widespread apocryphal works attributed to him (e.g., the famous *R. al-Ahadiyya*, *al-Shajara al-Ilâhiyya*, or the later commentary on his *K. al-Kunh*, recently translated as "What the Seeker Needs"): see the discussion of various apocrypha in our three-part detailed discussion of "*Ibn Arabî and His Interpreters*," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 106 - 7 (1986 - 87).

[13]See the recent study and translation by G. Elmore cited in the "Further Readings" section, or the even more striking example of Ibn 'Arabî's autobiographical *K. al-Isrâ'*. In general, much of Ibn 'Arabî's writing from that period only becomes comprehensible in light of his fuller descriptions and explanations scattered throughout the *Futuhât*.

[14]See our discussion and illustration of this subject in the long article cited in note 12 above.

[15]One of the most indispensable "tools" or preparations for understanding both the *Futuhât* and the *Fusûs al-Hikam* is a detailed awareness of these core "divine sayings" that are alluded to on virtually every page of both works. Ibn 'Arabî brought most of those hadith together in his own or version of the Islamic tradition of transmitting "forty" (*arba'in*) favorite hadith, the celebrated *Mishkât al-Anwâr* ("Niche for Lights"). A new English translation has been promised, and meanwhile, many of these "divine sayings" are already accessible in English in W. Graham's classic study, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Islam*, which was

inspired by Ibn 'Arabî's collection. See also the translations and Ibn 'Arabî's discussion of many of those hadith on the "vision" of God in our study *"Seeking God's Face': Ibn 'Arabî on Right Action and Theophanic Vision,"* JMIAS, XVI - XVII (1994 - 95).

[16] The realms of "being" or creation in question, as any reader of Ibn 'Arabî will quickly discover, are infinitely more extensive than the "lower world" of the physical senses. These ontological and cosmological dimensions of Ibn 'Arabî's writing are the particular focus of a number of the extensive translations by W. Chittick cited in the "Further Reading" section.

[17] Later Islamic traditions of interpretation have, for various reasons, tended to emphasize the two corresponding symbol-sets of the "Muhammadan Reality" (in both its existential and scriptural dimensions) and the symbolism of the "Completely Human Being" ("Perfect Man," etc.: *al-insân al-kâmil*). However - like much of the technical terminology of those later traditions more generally - the unfamiliarity of such language and symbolism (at least in its proper meanings) for most modern audiences can only too easily get in the way of readers' actually perceiving the immediate universality and applicability of the realities to which Ibn 'Arabî is referring.

[18] Allusion to the Prophet's prayer, "O my God, cause me to see things as they really are," and to his prayer that Ibn 'Arabî cites even more frequently, "O my Lord, increase me in knowing [of you]" - *rabbî zidnî 'ilman*.

[19] An equally essential dimension of *Haqq*, which also means what is 'right' and 'obligatory' in an ultimate sense and perspective.

[20] William Chittick's first book on the *Futûhât*, the *Sufi Path of Knowledge* (see "Further Readings") rightly emphasizes the importance (both intellectual and existential) of understanding Ibn 'Arabî's peculiar usage of this theological language, which is so essential that without it most of *The Meccan Revelations* will remain incomprehensible. Sachiko Murata's *The Tao of Islam* (also in "Further Readings") further develops both the Qur'anic roots of this spiritual language and its many elaborations in the later Islamic humanities (poetry, philosophy and Sufi teaching), in a very fruitful comparison with the central themes of Taoist thought.

[21] This is often clearly the case in the longer selections from the *Futuhât* translated in W. Chittick's *The Self-Disclosure of God* (see "Further Readings"), which are long enough for their dimensions of realization to become evident, especially in the many discussions of the "imaginal world" (*barzakh*) in the concluding chapter.

[22] With the possible exception of his most explicitly "practical" passages on spiritual practice and discernment, many of them translated in our forthcoming book on this subject (see "Further Readings").

[23] These key passages of Ibn 'Arabî's *muqaddima* are extracted from our longer overview and more extensive translations from this key opening section: "How to Study the *Futuhât*: Ibn 'Arabî's Own Advice," in *Muhyiddîn Ibn 'Arabî: A Commemorative Volume* (see note 36 below), pages 73 - 89. Victor Palleja has recently published a more extensive, reliable Spanish translation of much of this complex opening section.

[24]The long-lived spiritual guide and archetype of direct divine inspiration - alluded to in the Qur'anic account of Moses' initiation in the following passage from the Sura of the Cave (18:65ff.) - who played an important role in Ibn 'Arabî's own development, as well as in Sufism and popular Islamic spirituality more generally.

[25]In each of the translated passages the pronoun *you* is in the *plural*; the mysterious term *al-furqân* ("criterion," "separation") also appears six other times in the Qur'an, usually in reference to a mysterious type or source of revelation or spiritual awareness and divine guidance granted to several prophets. The multifaceted verb translated here as "to be mindful of" God is from the central Qur'anic term *taqwâ*, which refers both to the spiritual condition of awe and reverence of God and to the inner and outer actions of piety and devotion flowing from that state.

[26]See the extensive translation of these discussions in our study cited at note 23 above.

[27]Here Ibn 'Arabî appears to be playing with the expected Qur'anic *contrast* of the blind and seeing (6:50, etc.): in that light, these final remarks apparently are alluding to the particularly metaphysical, *universal* character of the wisdom in question here.

[28]Major autobiographical sections of the *khutba* regarding Ibn 'Arabî's role as "Seal of the Muhammadan Saints" were translated by M. Vâlsan (originally in *tudes Traditionnelles*, 1953) and were reprinted under the title "*l'Investiture du cheikh al-Akbar au centre suprme*" in the volume *l'Islam et la fonction de René Guénon* (Paris, 1984), pp. 177 - 91. A shorter part of that passage has more recently been translated by L. Shamash and S. Hirtenstein as "An Extract from the Preface to the *Futûhât*," in *Journal of the Muhyiddîn Ibn 'Arabî Society*, IV (1985), pp. 4 - 6. (See also the more recent Spanish translation by V. Palleja cited above.)

[29]Ibn 'Arabî's close friends in Tunisia are presented there as key members of the spiritual hierarchy.

[30]See the detailed discussion of the first thirteen chapters of this Section in M. Chodkiewicz's original Introduction to the Sindbad anthology (to be included in the forthcoming translation of the French sections of that book).

[31]Fully commented translations of all these chapters, plus the longer chapter 371 which brings them all together in one picture (which later inspired the builders of the Taj Mahal), are included in our forthcoming volume on *Ibn 'Arabî's "Divine Comedy": An Introduction to Islamic Eschatology*.

[32] The long section on the different types of "sainthood" here is extensively analyzed, and partially translated, in M. Chodkiewicz's pioneering study *The Seal of the Saints* (see "Further Readings"). Most of the many selections from this chapter included in this anthology were drawn from Ibn 'Arabî's fascinating responses to Tirmidhi's questionnaire.

[33] For the selections from chapters 366 ('The Mahdi's Helpers') and 367 (Ibn 'Arabî's *Mi'râj*), see our more extensive commentary and analysis in "Ibn 'Arabî's 'Esotericism': The Problem of Spiritual Authority," *Studia Islamica*, LXXI (1990), pp. 37 - 64; and "The Spiritual

Ascension: Ibn 'Arabî and the Mi'râj," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 107 (1987), pp. 629 - 52, and 108 (1988), pp. 63 - 77.

[34] This is the number of "divine Names" specifically enumerated in several famous hadith and reflected in the normal numbers of Islamic prayer beads; the possible connections of specific Names with each of the "Poles" discussed here are not explicit and have not yet been elucidated.

[35] Ibn 'Arabî's approach here is unique to him and not found in earlier classical Sufi discussions of the spiritual *maqâmât*.

[36] Readers of the Austin translation should also try to consult the missing translation of the Introductory section of the same work ("Excerpts from the Epistle on the Spirit of Holiness (*Risâlah Rûh al-Quds*)," translated by R. Boase and F. Sahnoun) in *Muhyiddîn Ibn 'Arabî: A Commemorative Volume*, edited by S. Hirtenstein and M. Tiernan (Shaftesbury, Element, 1993), which contains seventeen other important translations and critical studies. Austin's book is still available, through the Ibn 'Arabi Society, in the reprinted edition by Beshara Publishers, 1988.

[37] Still available in the later version published by the University of California Press, 1984, under the new title: *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophic Concepts*.

[38] Because both works are so highly allusive, personal, poetic, and so deeply rooted in very personal readings of difficult passages from Ibn 'Arabî, the Qur'an and many other Islamic classics, they should certainly be read in the original if at all possible.

[39] In English, the paperback edition of Corbin's *Creative Imagination* is now republished under the title *"Alone With the Alone"* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998; with a new preface by H. Bloom).